

THE
BENEFIT
AND
COMFORT
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

A SERMON preached in the High Church of
*Edinburgh, Monday, January 5. 1736, upon Oc-
casion of the Anniversary Meeting of the Society
in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge.*

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of Edinburgh.*

Published at the Desire of the SOCIETY.



EDINBURGH,

Printed by Mr. J. A. DAVIDSON and Company, and
Sold at his Shop opposite to the Cross. MDCCLXXXVI.

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The Benefit and Comfort of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

ISAIAH xxix. 18, 19.

*And in that Day shall the Deaf hear the Words of
the Book, and the Eyes of the Blind shall see out
of Obscurity, and out of Darkness.*

*The Meek also shall increase their Joy in the Lord,
and the Poor among Men shall rejoice in the holy
One of Israel.*



AFTER it had pleased God, of his amazing Mercy, to reveal to Man (which he did immediately upon his Fall) his Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*, to be exhibited in the Fulness of Time; it is no Wonder, that such standing Memorials of these joyful Tidings, as were most proper and significant, should be appointed, in order to keep up the Knowledge and Memory of this blessed Revelation, and to enliven the Faith and Hope of Men in all their Devotions and religious Performances; and accordingly we see, that it

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runs thro' all the Institutions and Ordinances, and sacred Rites, that obtain'd amongst the People of God before the Law of *Moses*. This legal Dispensation, of which he was honoured of God to be the prime Minister, appears to be fram'd with the same gracious View, and to the same blessed Purpose, even to prefigure and typify this glorious Redeemer, and that great Salvation he was to purchase by his precious Blood; the very Structure of this Dispensation, and the whole Service of it, look'd this Way, as appears plainly from the New Testament, and particularly from the Epistle of *Paul* to the *Hebrews*: And in this Sense, *the Law*, even the whole Law, *was a School-master to bring Men to Christ*. And as the Ordinances of the *Levitical* Dispensation, the Service of the Tabernacle and Temple, were typical and emblematical Prefigurations of the *Messias*, and our Redemption by him; so 'tis undeniable, that this Way of a typical Representation of the promised Saviour, is carried thro' the most august Prophecies concerning him in the Old Testament, which were partly verified in the Type, such as *David*, *Solomon*, and others, but fully and ultimately accomplish'd only in the Son of God our Saviour: And in like Manner, the great Salvation he was to be the Author of, and the spiritual and eternal Happiness he was to bestow upon his People, are foretold by the same inspired Prophets, under the Type and Figure of temporal Deliverances, and outward Peace and Prosperity; of this Kind are several august Predictions of this eminent Prophet *Isaiah*, who, as the Evangelist *John* tells us, *said these Things, when he saw his Glory and spake of him*.

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And of this Sort is the comfortable Prophecy in our Text ; which however it might be more immediately, and in Part verified, in some happy Events that followed, whereby Light and Joy were diffused among that People ; yet it ultimately and chiefly looks to the Days of the *Messias*, and is fully accomplish'd only in him, and in that Knowledge and Fulness of Joy, that his People, even the poorest of them, should have in and from him, and his glorious Gospel ; then indeed it was, and not till then, that this Prophecy should be fully verified, *That the Deaf should hear the Words of the Book, and the Eyes of the Blind should see out of Obscurity, and out of Darknes ; The Meek also should encrease their Joy in the Lord, and the Poor among Men should rejoice in the holy One of Israel.*

Instead of entertaining you with a critical Exposition of this Text, and the various Commentaries and Conjectures of learned Men upon it, I shall only observe, That the several Phrases used in it, the particular and remarkable Expressions in which this Prophecy is delivered, are to be found in many other uncontested Predictions of the *Messias*, and of the Blessings of his Kingdom and Government ; and the very same prophetical Phrases and Expressions quoted and adduced in the New Testament, as verified and fulfilled in *Christ*. Look to the xxxv. Chap. of this Book of *Isaiah*, 5. Ver. *Then the Eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb sing :* And the lxi. Chap. from the Beginning, to the 4. Ver. And these
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very Phrases of the Prophet are quoted by our blessed Saviour, as having their Accomplishment in himself, *Luke vii. 22. Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your Way, and tell John what Things you have seen and heard, how that the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised, and to the Poor the Gospel is preached. Luke iv. 17. And there was delivered unto him the Book of the Prophet Esaias, and when he had opened the Book, he found the Place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach Deliverance to the Captives, and recovering Sight to the Blind, to set at Liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable Year of the Lord.* And then it follows in the 21. *Ver. And he began to say unto them, This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears.* And in the Commission he gives to Paul after his Ascension, we see plainly, that these Predictions were yet to have a fuller Accomplishment in the Propagation of his Gospel through the Heathen Nations, *Acts xxvi. 18. Delivering thee from the People, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are sanctified by Faith that is in me.*

In discoursing further upon this Text of Scripture, I shall, thro' Divine Assistance,

First, Speak of the Stupidity and Ignorance of fallen Man, which is the Thing signified here by
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the Deaf and the Blind, and by the Obscurity and Darkness in which they are here represented as covered and involved.

II. Of the Light and Knowledge that the blessed *Messias* and his Gospel brings to such miserable Creatures, *The Deaf shall hear the Words of the Book, and the Eyes of the Blind shall see out of Obscurity, and out of Darkness.*

III. We shall speak of that great Joy in the Lord, that shall accompany this Knowledge, and flow from it.

IV. Shew that the *Meek* and the *Poor* in particular share in these great Blessings, and have special Advantages by this glorious Gospel: *The Meek shall increase their Joy in the Lord, and the poor among Men shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel.*

We shall offer you a few Thoughts upon each of these Particulars, and then conclude with a short Application, suited to the Occasion of our Meeting.

I. We are to speak of the Stupidity and Ignorance of fallen Man, which is the Thing signified and meant here by the *Deaf* and the *Blind*, and the *Obscurity* and *Darkness* which involves them. Man by a presumptuous Aspiring after more Knowledge than belong'd to him, lost that vast Treasure of Knowledge that he was possess'd of, and plunged himself and his Posterity in Darkness and Ignorance: Men after that became more and more vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned. Hence the Times before Christ are justly called by the Apostle, *The Times of Ignorance*, Acts xvii. 30. And altho' God did not leave himself in

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in these Times *without Witness*, in that he did Good, and gave them Rain and fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness; yet they were so deaf and stupid, as not to hear these plain and loud Lectures of the Works of God; so blind, as not to see the divine Hand that reached out these Blessings to them: *Darkness then did cover the Earth*, as this Prophet *Isaiab* expresseth it, and *gross Darkness the People*. The Light of the antient and primitive Revelations of God was gone; they had so stained and sullied it with the Fumes of their own Inventions, that it was no more to be seen among them; they had so defaced and obscur'd it by their presumptuous Additions, and wild Interpretations, that it ceased to be a Light unto them, lying as it were extinguished in the Rubbish of their gross Corruptions. And as to the subsequent Revelations of God made unto the *Jews*, the rest of the World around them were, upon the Accounts now mentioned, justly excluded from the Benefit of this Light, which shined in the House of *Jacob* only, except a very few, that by the particular Favour of Heaven got some Glimpses of it; so that *Darkness did indeed cover the Earth*, and *gross Darkness the People*. But this was not all; not only was there Obscurity and Darkness without; but, if I may so express it, Blindness within, as our Text intimates to us, *The Blind shall see out of Obscurity, and out of Darkness*; they had not only lost the Light, but lost Eyes to see it; the Light of their own Minds, with respect to divine Things, was almost quite extinguished: It is no Hyperbole or Stretch of Expression, but a just and true Description, that the
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Apostle gives us of this Darkness and Ignorance of the Heathen World, *Eph. iv. 18.* *Having their Understandings darkned, being alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Heart:* And if the Understanding of Man, which is the Candle of the Lord, be so darkned and ecclipsed, How shall he see to walk or work? *If the Light that is in thee,* says our blessed Saviour, *be Darkness, How great is that Darkness!*

But some may say, How is this Account of the Stupidity and Ignorance of the Heathen World consistent with the History we have of Arts and Sciences, and the famous Masters of them, before the Times of the Gospel? What shall we say of the *Brachmans* of *India*, of the *Magi* of *Persia*, of the *Priests* of *Egypt*, and the *Astrologers* of *Chaldea*, Did not these Men see out of Darkness, and out of Obscurity? And to come nearer home, What shall we say of the *Druids* of *Britain* and *Gaul*, who had an admirable Institution and Discipline amongst them; and amongst other valuable Things, taught the Immortality of the Soul, as we are inform'd by no less an Author than *Julius Caesar*, * who by the by, was no Friend to that Doctrine himself: What shall we say of *Greece* and *Rome*, and the famous Men they have produc'd, that are likely to be of everlasting Reputation in the World? Lawgivers, Philosophers, Orators, not to speak of their admirable Poets: What shall we say of *Socrates*, *Aristotle*, *Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Cicero*, and many others I might name, Were these blind also? We will not deny these

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* Lib. 6. de Bell. Gal.

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great Men their due Praises; as they had noble Opportunities and Advantages, so they were Men of a vast Genius, of a prodigious Reach of Thought, Men of incredible Application and Diligence, and their Writings, (such of them as did write, for *Socrates* wrote none, so far as we know) are without doubt, the most polite of all human Composures: These were the great Lights of the Heathen World, and Mankind to this Day are obliged to them, and will be as long as their Works remain, and Men have Sense to relish them. But, at the same Time, let us remember, that their Number is but small; there have been but very few such Men in the Heathen World, during the Space of five Thousand Years; their Knowledge was very much confin'd to themselves and a few of their Disciples: The Bulk of Mankind, and particularly the Poor among Men, as our Text hath it, had no Access to this Knowledge, they had neither Leisure for it, nor Capacity enough to learn it, their Schemes of Morality and Reasonings about Virtue, were too fine for the Vulgar: The World a-round them lay still in gross Ignorance and Darkness, entertaining the most absurd Notions of their Deities, and worshipping them by such Rites and Actions, as were not only trifling and ludicrous, but many of them the greatest Pieces of Obsceneness and Cruelty that Men were capable of. Thus it was with the Heathen World before *Christ*, and since his appearing in the World; and thus it continues to be at this Day among Pagans, who have nothing of Christian Knowledge among them, as may be seen in the Collections that have been made of these
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Abominations of the Heathen, by honest and industrious Men; particularly by our worthy Brother and Countryman Mr. *Robert Millar*, in his *History of the Propagation of Christianity*; a Work deservedly noticed and valued both at Home and Abroad. But after all, 'tis not only the Vulgar, and the Bulk of Mankind, that were in this dismal Darkneſs and Ignorance, while they wanted Divine Revelation; but even theſe great Men, whom we mentioned lately, and who ſhin'd like ſo many Lights in the Miſt of Darkneſs, how plauſibly ſoever they ſpeak in other Matters; yet were miſerably at a Loſs, as to theſe Points of Knowledge, which are of the greateſt Importance to Man, the Knowledge of the ever bleſſed God the Author of our Being, the Knowledge of the chief Good, the Knowledge of a future State, the Way how to pleaſe God, and to be happy for ever (not to ſpeak of their Uncertainty and endless Contention about other Things) in theſe great Matters, that are of the laſt Conſequence to Man; the ſharpeſt ſighted of them, were but Gueſſers at beſt; and when they ſpeak of theſe Matters, we may ſee them gropping, ſtumbling, and falling like Men in the Dark; who, tho' they had the beſt Eyes of the World, were at a Loſs to find their Way, for Want of Light.

Neither are the *Jews* to be exeem'd from this Charge of Ignorance: Tho' God had given them his *Statutes and Judgments*, which he had not done to every Nation; yet they ſo little conſidered and underſtood them, as to place all their Religion in Forms and Ceremonies, and ritual Obſervances, forgetting the main End and Deſign of the Ordina-

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nances and Institutions of that Dispensation, and *the weighty Matters of the Law*. The Ordinances of God were so mix'd and blended with the Traditions of Men, and the divine Laws so misinterpreted by their Doctors, that both Priests and People were in gross Ignorance, as appears from the Accounts we have of them all alongst in Scripture, especially in the New Testament; and particularly from that short, but significant Description given us of their melancholly State, by our blessed Saviour, That it was *the Blind leading the Blind*; so that both of them, Teachers, and they who were taught by them, were in the greatest Hazard of Ruin and Destruction, *Matth. xv. 14: Let them alone, they be blind Leaders of the Blind; and if the Blind lead the Blind, both shall fall into the Ditch.*

We proceed in the *second Place*, to speak of that Light and Knowledge, that our Lord Jesus Christ, and his blessed Gospel, brings to miserable Man, thus sunk in Ignorance and Darkness: *The Deaf do now hear the Words of the Book of God*, stupid Men are now instructed; *and the Eyes of the Blind do now see out of Obscurity, and out of Darkness*: This was the very End of Christ's coming into the World, as he tells us himself, *John ix. 39. I am come into this World, that they which see not might see.* And as he was promised to be a Light both to Jews and Gentiles; so when he was come, he himself expressly declares, That he was the Light of the World, *John viii. 12. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the World; he that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life*: And the great Business he puts in the Hands of his Apostles and

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Disciples, the Errand upon which he sent them, was to diffuse this Light through the World, to *turn Men from Darkness to Light*. So runs the Commission that the Apostle Paul got in particular, *Acts xxvi. 17, 18*. This Light of the Gospel makes great and glorious Discoveries to Mankind, Discoveries of the most sublime, the most useful and necessary Things. It gives us the Knowledge of the ever blessed God, and the divine Perfections, in a much clearer Manner than ever they were known before ; *No Man hath seen God at any Time, the only begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*. It discovers ourselves to us, and that is no small Matter ; *γινώσκει σὺ αὐτόν*, know thyself, will certainly be own'd to be one of the most important Pieces of Knowledge to Man, tho' it had never been delivered by an Oracle ; and whatever else we know about ourselves, if we know not our Disease, if we know not our Sin, our Weakness, our Misery, we are ignorant of ourselves, we proceed upon a wrong Scheme ; and however we may refine upon it, and plausibly gratify the Pride and Vanity of our own Minds, there's a gross Mistake at the Bottom, and we are still the farther off from the Cure : The Light of Divine Revelation lays us open to ourselves, so that if we do not wilfully shut our Eyes, we cannot but see, *that we are poor and miserable, and blind, and wretched, and naked*. This blessed Gospel leaves us not with this melancholly and humbling Discovery ; it sets the Remedy in as clear a Light as the Disease, even *the Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which was lost* ; it shews us, that *we have Redemption thro' his Blood,*

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Blood, even the Forgiveness of our Sins, that thro' him we are justified from all these Things, from which we could never have been justified by the Law of Moses: That great Doctrine of the Pardon of Sin and Peace with God, thro' the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of the Son of God, is the peculiar Glory of the Gospel, which no Light either from Angels or Men could ever have discovered to us. This blessed Revelation presents us with a more perfect Rule of our Duty, and a far more compleat System of true Morality than ever we had before: It discovers to us where our Strength lies for these Duties, and the powerful and sufficient Aid that's provided for us, even the Spirit and Grace of Christ: It makes awful Discoveries of the invisible World, and opens to us a glorious Scene beyond the dark Regions of Death and the Grave, by bringing Life and Immortality to Light. It acquaints us with the Resurrection of the Body, the Judgment of the great Day, and the eternal Consequences of it, when the Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal. These are some of the great and glorious Discoveries that the Gospel makes to the Children of Men; these great Doctrines it teacheth, not in Words of Mens Wisdom, not by dark and doubtful Disputations, but with divine Authority, and in such a plain and easy Manner, as the most vulgar Capacities may learn and know them. Nay, the Lord Jesus Christ not only gives this external Light, but he also gives Eyes to see it by the Illumination of his Spirit. 2 Cor. iv. 6. God who commanded Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into our Hearts, to give the Light of the Know-

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Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.

The *third* Thing proposed, was to speak of that great Joy in the Lord, that accompanies this Knowledge and flows from it; *The Meek*, says our Text, *shall increase their Joy in the Lord, and the Poor among Men shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel*: Blindness, Obscurity and Darkness, is a heartless and melancholly State; but Light gives Pleasure and Joy to Mankind; *Truly Light is sweet*, says Solomon, *and a pleasant Thing is it for the Eyes to behold the Sun*. The intellectual Light of the Mind affords still a far purer and greater Joy; the Demonstration of a Proposition, the Invention and Discovery of Truth, even tho' it be a Matter of little or no Use to us, gives a secret and very sensible Pleasure to the Understanding; and the Discovery of some Truths in Philosophy has sometimes filled the Inquirer with such Joy, that he has been ravished and transported, as it were, out of himself. And if this be the Case of Knowledge in general, as certainly it is; much more does it hold true of this divine and heavenly Knowledge, of which we are speaking: Hence the Gospel which conveys this Knowledge to Men, is called *good Tidings, and Tidings of great Joy*; and the Design of preaching and propagating it among Men is, *That their Joy may be full*. There was never any Institution, any System of Knowledge, so evidently in all its Parts calculated for the Joy and Happiness of Man, as the Christian Religion is, The ever blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Redeeming Love, Reconciliation and Peace with God through the Blood of his Son, the Justification

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fication of our Persons, the Sanctification and Perfection of our Natures, the Consolations of the Divine Spirit, the Glories of another World, and the eternal Enjoyments and Felicities of the heavenly State : These are the great and noble Objects of Christian Knowledge ; and the very Theory of them, the very Contemplation of these sublime and glorious Truths, cannot but give great Pleasure to the Mind and Understanding of Man ; But what Joy, must we think, flows in upon the Soul, when it not only contemplates, but possesseth these invaluable Blessings, as all true Christians do ; when this Knowledge is accompanied with Application and Property ? Surely such a Knowledge, such a Faith of these great Truths and Doctrines, cannot but give the truest and highest Joy to the Soul of Man ; *Believing we rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* The Joy of human Knowledge, the Joy of Friendship, the Joy of Marriage, the Joy of Harvest, the Joy of Liberty, the Joy of Victory and Triumph, are nothing in Comparison of the Joys of God's Salvation.

The *last* Thing we proposed, was to shew how the Meek and the Poor in special share of these great Blessings, and have particular Advantages by this glorious Gospel ; *The Meek shall increase their Joy in the Lord, and the Poor among Men shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel.* By the Meek and the Poor, we may understand such as are humble and self-denied, these whom our Saviour calls *poor in Spirit* ; such Persons are docile and tractable, they are emptied of themselves, sensible of their Sin and Misery, and so ready to receive and enter-

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tain the joyful Doctrine of the Gospel, and the great and glorious Blessings it brings to miserable Men; *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*: But we are not to restrict the Words to this Sense, but understand them in their literal and common Acceptation, as signifying those that are low and poor in the World as to their external Circumstances, even the Mean and Indigent, and destitute among Men. The Septuagint Version expresses this Part of the Text very strongly, not only πτωχοὶ the Poor, but ἀπλητισμένοι τῶν ἀνδρώπων, the hopeless and desperate among Men; the Gospel brings Joy and Happiness even to these. The Vulgar and the Poor were miserably neglected as to Instruction and Knowledge; as their outward Condition and mean Circumstances made them obscure, so they were in a Manner given over to Ignorance and Darkness: The Heathen Philosophy and Morality was above their Reach; as we said before, they had neither Leisure nor Capacity to learn it, and so of Course, took up with the current Fables of their Time, and the ridiculous and profane Rites of the idolatrous Worship that was established amongst them. And altho' there was particular Care taken of the Poor in the Laws and Institutions of God under the Old Testament, yet they were shamefully overlook'd and neglected among the *Jews*, particularly as to their Instruction, as appears by the many Complaints made thereof by the Prophets of God. And in the Days of our blessed Saviour Things were not a whit better, but rather much worse. The Doctors of the Law, Priests, Scribes, Pharisees;

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were supercilious, haughty and covetous Men that neglected and disdained the Poor, as not worth the noticing or regarding; nay they treated them as if they had been contemptible and execrable, as appears from their own Words, *John vii. 48. Have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him? but this People who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* Thus the Poor among Men were left in Ignorance and Darknes both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*. And it is certainly one of the peculiar Glories of the Christian Religion, that it takes Care of the Poor in all Respects, particularly their Instruction in the great and necessary Things of Religion, *That the Deaf may hear the Words of the Book, that the Eyes of the Blind may see out of Obscurity and out of Darknes, that the Meek may increase their Joy, and that the Poor among Men may rejoice in the holy One of Israel.* And this is a Matter of so great Moment, that as it was particularly foretold, as one of the Glories of the *Messias* Reign, so when our Saviour was come unto the World, and had entred upon his publick Ministry, he takes notice of this as one of the most exprefs and shining Characters of his Times, *Luke vii. 22. Luke iv. 17, — 22; and in* Consequence of this, we find him cheerfully and unweariedly employed in this good Work, going about through the Country Villages and Cities, instructing the Poor in a plain, easy and familiar Manner, and at the same Time, with an Authority far superior to that of their greatest Doctors, *He taught them as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.* Haughty and supercilious

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ous Men, vain and proud Sciolists neglect and despise the Poor, but the Son of God, God incarnate undertakes to be their Patron and Instructor: And as he was thus employed himself personally, so that Divine Religion which he sets up in the World is evidently and remarkably fram'd and adapted for this good and generous Purpose, even for the Instruction and Salvation of the Poor. There are indeed great Depths in the Christian Doctrine, high and sublime Points sufficient to exercise the best Understanding, not only of Men but of Angels; but the great and necessary Points of Christianity are but few and plain, such as may be easily taught and soon learn'd, even by the Poor of this World, without taking them off from that Work and Labour that's necessary for their own Maintainance, and the Benefit of the Society to which they belong. Besides, 'tis the Genius of this Religion, that they who know it to Purpose, do endeavour by all proper Means the Propagation of it, tho' with the greatest Labour, and under the greatest Discouragements, as *Origen* † justly observes against *Celsus*, who alledges, "That tho' all the World would become Christians, Christians themselves would not admit of it." Further, the standing Ministry settled and authorized by this holy Religion, and their fixed Work and Service, is evidently for the Benefit and Instruction of the Poor, and plainly contributes to it; qualified Men being set apart and suitably provided, for this very Work of dispensing the Ordinances and Institutions of Christianity, *preaching in Season and out of Season, and teaching publicly,*

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and from House to House, in all which the Poor and the Vulgar have the Benefit of their Labours as well as the Rich. And to add no more upon this Head, the high and strong Obligations that the Christian Religion lays upon us to Charity, carries on this noble and generous Design of doing Good to the Poor. Never was this excellent Grace of Charity so explained before, never was it so taught, so enforced, so exemplified as under the New Testament Dispensation; all which induces and engageth the Christian to do all the Good he can to the Poor, especially to his Soul, that he may be saved, that he may see out of Obscurity and out of Darkness, that the Poor among Men may rejoice in the holy One of Israel; that tho' they be poor in this World, yet they may be rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I proceed now to make Application of this Doctrine in a few practical *Inferences*. And in the *first* Place, Let us all heartily bless our gracious God for his Goodness to us, and to our Ancestors in this our native Country, in sending his glorious Gospel amongst us so early, and continuing it still with us after all our Provocations, and notwithstanding the Endeavours of Devils and Men to rob us of so great a Blessing. We who were blind, *do now see out of Obscurity and out of Darkness, and the Poor among Men do rejoice in the holy One of Israel.* God forbid that this be our Condemnation, *That Light has come unto us, and that we loved Darkness rather than Light.* The longer we enjoy this Divine Light, we should
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love it the better, and have the higher Esteem and Value for it, and the greater Abhorrence of all Attempts against it; we may justly look upon such Endeavours, as Attempts against the Light and Joy and Happiness of Mankind, and if they should succeed, the sure and effectual Way of reducing us to our former Barbarism, and plunging us again in Ignorance and Darkness, and all the miserable Consequents of that melancholly and dismal State: Neither should it discourage us in our Profession, or make us in the least shy of our holy Religion, that we see such Attempts in our Day, that Men of Parts and Learning imploy their Pens against Christianity; the best Things in the World have in all Ages met with Contradiction and Opposition; and this is no new Trial to our holy Religion; Christianity was impugn'd more than a Thousand Years ago by Men of greater Abilities, and far greater Power than our modern Deists can pretend to, such as *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*, *Hierocles*; but they were fully answered by the learned Writers on the Christian Side, particularly by *Origen* and *Cyrill of Alexandria*. The Cross and Truth of *Christ* triumphed over all the Sophistry and Eloquence of Man, and will do so to the End of the World: And the late Writings against the Christian Religion have been so well answered, that I'm perswaded, they have made this Divine Light to shine the brighter in the Eyes of all fair Judges and impartial Inquirers; and of late, we are obliged to a Gentleman of a distinguished Genius, in our own Country, for some curious Thoughts upon Religion, which, I hope, may

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may do no small Service to the Christian Cause. This glorious Cause shall certainly be maintain'd against all the Wit and all the Malice of Devils and Men; *He hath founded his Church upon a Rock, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

2. As we should continue to value and esteem this blessed Gospel, and to grow in the Knowledge and Faith of it; so let us by all Means labour, my dear Friends and Brethren, to live suitably to it. A bad Life is one of the worst of Heresies, and one of the most grievous Objections against our holy Religion. *Ye were sometimes Darknes,* but now are ye *Light in the Lord, walk as Children of Light*, abounding in the Fruits of that blessed Spirit that has enlightned you; for so is it there explained, *Eph. v. 8, 9. For the Fruit of the Spirit (says he) is in all Goodness and Righteousness and Truth.* This is to walk as Children of the Light; this is to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, as the Apostle expresth it, 4th Chap. of the same Epistle from the Beginning, even with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; and in the 17. Ver. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the Vanity of their Minds;* and after a short Description of this lewd and shameful Walk of the Gentiles; and the black Spring and Source of it, we have an excellent Account from the inspired Apostle, of that Walk and Conversation that becomes Christians, which

of the Christian Revelation. 23

which I recommend to your serious Perusal. I only read to you the Conclusion of that Chapter, as what we all need to have frequently inculcated upon us with the greatest Earnestness, especially at this Time when the *Iniquities* there mentioned do shamefully abound, and the *Love* of many waxeth cold, 31st Ver. *Let all Bitterness and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you.*

In the last Place, seeing it is but a small Part of the habitable World, in Comparison of the rest, that's enlightned with this divine Revelation; seeing the Bulk of Mankind, and even some in the remote Corners of our own Country, continue still in Ignorance and Darknes; and seeing this comfortable Prophecy in our Text wants a great deal of its Accomplishment, let us lay this seriously to Heart, and use our utmost Endeavours for propagating this holy Religion, both at home and abroad, *That the Eyes of the Blind may see out of Obscurity and out of Darknes, that the Meek may increase their Joy in the Lord, and the Poor among Men may rejoice in the holy One of Israel.* This we may, and should do by our exemplary Walk and Conversation, by our publick preaching and teaching, by Family Instruction, by our fervent Prayers to God, and by opening our Purses and contributing according to our Abilities, for advancing so good a Work, and such a generous and charitable Design. And among other Inducements and Encouragements to this Charity, this is none
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of the least, that we have a noble and publick Opportunity of it at hand and in our View, even *the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge*, established and authorized by Royal Letters Patent. This Society has now been employed in this good Work upwards of 24 Years, and through the Blessing of God have made very considerable Progress in it. The Zeal of our gracious Sovereign for the Christian Religion, has been no small Encouragement to the Society, particularly his Majesty's Royal Bounty of *L. 1000* yearly, for carrying on the same noble Design of propagating Christian Religion in the Highlands and Islands. They have likewise been very much encouraged by considerable Donations, not only from Persons of all Ranks in our native Country, but a great many in *England*, who, within these five or six Years, that is since the Society settled a Meeting of Correspondents at *London*, to whose Zeal and Vigilance a great deal is owing; have contributed so liberally to this good Work, that it deserves this solemn and publick Acknowledgement. The Society have also Correspondents in *New-England*, and three Missionaries employed there for the Instruction and Conversion of the native *Indians*, in which glorious Undertaking (the first Attempt of that Sort they have made) they have been very much assisted and encouraged by his Excellency, the Governor of that Plantation: They have likewise a Missionary imployed in *Georgia*, for the Benefit of the Colony, lately transported from our Country, upon Application and Encouragement from the Honourable Trustees of *Georgia*, who,

at the same Time that they take Care of their Plantations, and the Culture of their new Lands, are so good and wise, as not to neglect the Religion and Manners of their Colonies. These are good Beginnings, and great Undertakings, and no doubt also very chargeable to the Society; and therefore are so many Arguments and Encouragements to further Contributions, and I hope you will use them as such, both with yourselves and others. The Schools of the Society at present amount to 117, at which are taught 3992: One of these Schools is so much in my View at present, and makes such an Appearance in this Assembly, that I cannot but take notice of it; 'tis the Orphan Hospital there before you; the Sallary of their School-master is paid by the Society, and there are about 50 Boys and Girls taught by him; all these are maintained in the Hospital, and employed in useful Work of several Kinds, upon the mortified Donations, and occasional Supplies of charitable Persons; they are cloathed with their own Manufacture, and shew by their Looks, that they have Abundance of clean and wholesome Food; 'tis an Hospital but of two Years standing, a lusty Plant of so short a Growth, especially in a cold Climate, and none of the richest of Soils. May the God of Heaven, *be in whom the Fatherless findeth Mercy*, remarkably bless all such Nurseries of Religion, and useful Industry, especially these that are established in this City; and the other charitable Houses founded in it, which are no less a Blessing to the Old and Infirm, than these are to destitute young Ones; and the Lord, in whose

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Hand the Hearts of Men are, move such as are able, to support and incourage them, that they may thrive and flourish, and be continued to latestt Posterity.

I conclude this Discourse with a short Address to the Honourable and worthy Members of this Society, and the Managers of its Affairs. I could insist at great Length, and in a very copious and particular Manner on your Praises, and that without Flattery, or transgressing in the least the Bounds either of Truth or Decency; but I know it would not be agreeable to yourselves, and therefore I forbear it: I only presume to put you in Mind, for your Encouragement, that you are imployed in a noble and generous Work, that your Time and Labour, and Attendance are bestowed upon the best Purpose and Project, that can possibly employ the Talents of Men, even, *That the Deaf may hear the Words of the Book, that the Eyes of the Blind may see out of Darknes and out of Obscurity, that the Meek may increase their Joy in the Lord, and that the poor among Men may rejoice in the holy One of Israel*: Neither ought we to be discouraged with some Rubs and Disappointments; that has been, and probably will be the Fate of the greatest and best Undertakings in the World; how carefully soever they are managed, something will happen now and then to their Loss and Prejudice; But upon such cross Events, great Minds engaged in a good Cause, as without all Doubt this is, should assume to themselves new Courage and Resolution, and by an obstinate and perse-

of the Christian Revelation. 27

persevering Diligence overcome all Difficulties,
as I hope you shall do through the Grace and
Favour of God: Therefore, *Do not weary in Well-*
doing, for in due Time you shall reap if ye faint
not.

F I N I S



of the Christian Testimony

Persevering Diligence overcome all Difficulties
as I hope you shall do through the Grace and
Favour of God: Therefore, I wait many in
Christ, for in due Time you shall reap if ye faint

1840

